

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 18029

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IN
SUBJECT: POLITICAL CONTEST IN WEST BEBGAL

FOL SENT NEW DELHI PRIORITY, INFO BOMBAY MADRAS DTD DEC 14
FROM CALCUTTA SIGNED LIEBOWITZ RPTD YOU

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L CALCUTTA 3104

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IN
SUBJ: POLITICAL CONTEST IN WEST BENGAL

1. POLITICAL CRISIS IN WEST BENGAL DEEPENEISON MONDAY,
DECEMBER 13, AS TWO LEADING OPPONENTS OF CHIEF MINISTER
RAY IN THE WEST BENGAL CABINETN COMMERCE MINISTER
TARUN KANTI GHOSH AND IMIGRATION MINISTER A.B.-. GHANI
KHAN CHOWDHURY, MET WITH THE STATE GOVERNOR. ACCORDING
TO ARTICLE IN STATESMAN, THEY ASKED INTERVENTION BY THE
CENTRAL GOVERNMENT BECAUSE "THE STATE ADMINISTRATION
HAS COME TO A HALT." IN SEPARATE MEETINGS WITH GOVERNOR
DIAS, THEY REPORTEDLY ARGUED THAT A MAJORITY OF THE
STATE MINISTERS WERE NOW IN FAVOR OF REMOVING RAY.

2. OTHER MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS DURING DAY WERE VISIT OF
UNION MINISTER OF COMMERCE D.P. CHATTOPADHYAYA TO
CALCUTTA, WHERE HE MET WITH LEADERS OF BOTH GROUPS,
AND VISIT OF STATE FOOD MINISTER PRAFULLA KANTI GHOSH
TO DELHI, WHERE HE REPORTEDY MET WITH SANJAY GANDHI.
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SANJAY IS SAID TO BE PUTTING PRESSURE ON P.K. GHOSH

TO ABANDON HIS SUPPORT OF RAY.

3. MEANWHILE BOTH SIDES ARE REPORTEDLY MAKING EFFORTS TO PICK UP SUPPORTERS AMONG STATE MLA'S AND OTHER POLITICAL LEADERS. A KEY TARGET IS YOUTH AND LABOR LEADER LAKSHMI KANTA BOSE, WHO FOR THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS HAS BEEN IN AN ALLIANCE WITH P.R. DAS MUNSHI IN SUPPORT OF RAY. THUS FAR, NEITHER GROUP SEEMS TO HAVE MADE A SIGNIFICANT BREAKTHROUGH.

4. CPI HAS ALSO BEGUN TO TAKE MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN THIS CONFLICT. IT IS PREPARING FOR A YOUTH RALLY ON THE MAIDAN ON DECEMBER 18 AND A RALLY OF ITS CALCUTTA DISTRICT COUNCIL ON DECEMBER 23. ACCORDING TO REPORTS IN THE CPI DAILY, KALANTAR, PROPAGANDA LEAFLETS ARE BEING DISTRIBUTED AND MEETINGS HELD IN VARIOUS PARTS OF WEST BENGAL IN PREPARATION FOR THESE RALLIES. ONE LEAFLET REPORTEDLY ARGUES THAT BUSINESSMEN HAVE TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF THE INSTABILITY IN THE STATE TO RAISE PRICES. AS QUOTED IN KALANTAR, DECEMBER 14, IT GOES ON, "WHILE THE SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY IS THIS BAD, A SMALL REACTIONARY CLIQUE WITHIN THE CONGRESS-- FAILING TO ORGANIZE A POLITICAL COUP BY CONVENING A CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY--HAS NOW STARTED TO BRING ABOUT UNCERTAINTIES IN THE POLITICS OF THE COUNTRY IN A DIFFERENT WAY. IN THIS STATE ALSO THE REACTIONARY CLIQUE HAS STARTED THE CONSPIRACY TO CHANGE THE ADMINISTRATION...THE COMMUNIST PARTY WILL LAUNCH POLITICAL AGITATION IN ALL THE DISTRICTS AGAINST THIS CHANGE."

5. POSSIBLY CONCERNED OVER SUCH AGITATION, THE POLICE IN WEST BENGAL HAVE REPORTEDLY BEEN PUT ON ALERT. ACCORDING TO AMRITA BAZAR PATRIKA, DECEMBER 14, A HIGH LEVEL MEETING OF OFFICERS DISCUSSED ON DECEMBER 13 THE LAW AND ORDER SITUATION IN THE STATE. SOME OBSERVERS ARE SAID TO THINK THAT "A CHANGE IN THE POLITICAL SET-UP MIGHT SPARK OFF TROUBLE." AMRITA ALSO REPORTS THAT ANTI-RAY FORCES IN WEST BENGAL HAVE CHARGED THAT "SOME CIRCLES" MIGHT TRY TO CREATE DISTURBANCES IN THE WAKE OF ANY CHANGE IN ORISSA.

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WE ARE NOT AWARE OF ANY LARGE-SCALE DISTURBANCES IN WEST BENGAL, BUT FSL'S HAVE WITNESSED CPI STREET CORNER MEETINGS.

LIEBOWITZ

UNQTE SCHNEIDER

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SIGNED LIEBOWITZ RPTD YOU
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